Romans 8.1-17a

Introduction

Last week concluded our series "Killing Sin" and this week we have come to the portion of Romans that gives the antidote to the sin cancer. Sin has infected humanity. It is like a fatal poison that has been injected in every person. It has spread and the symptoms have surfaced - hate, lies, drunken stupor, lust, immorality, idolatry, and the rest. Humans all over the world face certain death. If something big does not happen, everyone is going to die.

In Romans 8, Paul gives the antidote to sin - the Holy Spirit. If you live by the Spirit, you can put to death your increasing sins. (v. 13) If you are in Christ, you have received the Spirit who gives life, just as he gave life to Christ in his resurrection.

In the passage we will look at today, there is a dichotomy - living by the flesh and living by the Spirit. Living by the flesh is what we, Christians, once did, but now we have the Spirit, who gives true life. If you are an unbelieving person, you have never experienced true life. If you are a believer, you cannot imagine going back to the misery of an uncertain destiny. So before we begin, I ask the question "Do you have the Spirit? Or are you living in uncertainty? Are you living according to your sinful desires? If so, the offer is here for you turn from that garbage and to the living Spirit of almighty God.

Text

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but

you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ.

Body

There is no condemnation.

The very first verse in the passage is one of the most famous Scripture verses in the world. It has meant many things to many people. To some it means that the weight of rules and regulations has been lifted from their shoulders so they can live a life in liberation unto God. To others it means that they can forget the past and look to the future. Their past is filled with drugs, several sexual partners, rape and molestation, addiction and now that they have been placed into Christ they will never be condemned for that sin, but have life because of the substitutionary atoning death of Jesus. If you are saved, you have been justified (declared righteous by God), and that will never be removed from you. God the Father has already punished the Son for your sin so that you might live. If he were to condemn you for the sin he has already punished Jesus for, he would be unjust. But as we have seen in chapter 3, God sent Christ to die on our behalf so that he would be "just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (3:26)" There is no room for condemnation for those who have already been covered by the glorious grace of God. There is only room for worship from us to God, who has changed our lives and saved us from ourselves.

Jesus has done it for us.

"God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do." The law was given to Israel to show them how they ought to live in order to be pleasing to God. The blessing of the law was life, but the curse was death. Since humans live to please their own desires and serve their flesh, they weaken the law, hence the curse upon all of humanity. But God has come up with the solution - sending his own Son in the place of the new humanity. The way he sent him was important. He sent him (remember that Jesus is fully God) in the form of a man just like you and me - sinful humans that we are - and sent him on our behalf for our sin so that he would kill it. And in the death of sin, the requirement of the law - strict obedience - is fulfilled because no sin is found in those who are in Christ, but the righteousness of Christ covers our nakedness. (Ezekiel 16.8) And now we have true life in the Spirit and we walk not in our own lusts, but in the power of the Spirit.

Fleshy people and Spiritual people.

"Those who live according to the flesh." Who lives according to the flesh? Fleshy people! Those whose desires are for themselves and their own idea of what is good. They appropriate goodness to mean that which temporarily satisfies. Good for them is sexual encounters, alcoholism, homosexuality, greed, gluttony, excess. Good is not faithful marriage, moderation, masculinity, and selflessness. Although it

may seem like it is at times, the motives of the heart bear the truth. People who live in flesh serve themselves and if something big doesn't happen they will never realize it is not about them at all, but that it is about Jesus. They set their minds on the things that make them the center of their world and this leads to death. Serving the flesh kills, but serving the Spirit gives new life.

"Those who live according to the Spirit." Who lives according to the Spirit? Spiritual people! By spiritual I do not mean they are in to herbal tea, nature, yoga, and eastern religions, but I mean of the Holy Spirit of God. Those whose desires are for the glory of God and to advance his Kingdom and make him famous among the nations. Spiritual people see good as God sees it. It's not moral lessons or 12 steps for being better parents. It's advancing the gospel of the kingdom of God for all peoples everywhere to turn from sin and to Jesus for the removal of sin and the credit of righteousness. Spiritual people do this by being missional, authentic, and Christocentric - all of the values of The Mission. Spiritual people live intentional, gospel filled lives in order to win some to Christ. Spiritual people are *real* people who admit their inadequacies and who point to Christ as the only solution. Spiritual people see Christ in all things as the Righteous Ruler over all creation and the Sustainer of us all. They want to see Christ exalted above all things, because he is the only one who is worthy of such an exaltation.

In Galatians chapter 5, Paul unpacks what it means to live according to the flesh and what it means to live according to the Spirit. Verses 16 - 25:

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.

The question is do you walk or make a practice of such fleshy things? Or do you bear the fruit of the Spirit? Remember this charge: "those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." Those who live by the flesh will not experience Jesus and his kingdom, but those who walk by the Spirit will. They bear fruit that evidences their true citizenship in the kingdom. Those who are in Jesus Christ have died to the fleshy passions and are alive to the will of the Spirit.
Do you have death? Or do you have life and peace?

The Fleshy Mind

"The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God...it cannot submit to God's law...Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." We have done a lot of talking

about humanity's depravity over the several months that we have been in Romans. These verses continue that idea. We have already identified the people who live according to the flesh are unbelieving people. These are the same people who are "storing up for themselves wrath (Romans 2:5)." These are the same people Paul wrote about in chapter 3: "None is good, not even one...no one understands, no one seeks for God." Humans are inherently depraved creatures from birth. David in Psalm 51 says he was "brought forth in iniqiuity, in sin did my mother conceive me." Those who are of the flesh cannot please God and cannot "make right" their relationship to God. They are not reconcilers. They cannot place themselves under the authority of God. They must be placed by an outside force. Apart from the empowerment of the Spirit, they are doomed.

This is how we are saved. The Spirit of God illumines the eyes of our heart, shows us our sin, and enables us to turn from our sins and trust in Jesus. Apart from his Redemptive plan, we would all die. This is the weight of grace. We are undeserving, wretched people who cannot change without supernatural help. We need someone to save us from ourselves. That's exactly what Jesus does for us.

The Indwelling Spirit

"The Spirit of God dwells in you." If you are believing, you are not of the flesh anymore, but have been placed "in" the Spirit and he dwells in you. That tug on your heart when you sin. That conviction that forces you into repentance. That comfort that God is there with you. That is the work of the indwelling Spirit. Every believer has been given this gift. "Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him." This is precisely why I asked our first question - Do you have the Spirit? If you are here tonight and do not have the Spirit in your life, you are an unbeliever and must turn from your sins and put your trust in Jesus.

Because of the righteousness of God that you have received through faith in Jesus, the Spirit is able to give you life, even if sin has killed your earthly body. Let's use an illustration to unpack this. One of my college professors was a drug user before he came to know the Lord. He was at the point in his life that he would use dirty needles to get his fix. And it caught up with him. He now lives with Hepatitis. He struggles to get out of bed. He struggles to walk, talk, and to live a simple life. This is all because his life of sin prior to salvation.

You may have a similar story whether it be gang activity, alcoholism, sexual immorality. You may have a disease or haunting memories that are literally killing or have killed your body. But life is given by the Spirit. Righteousness has been given to you so that you will live eternally. The Spirit that resurrected Jesus from the dead three days after the crucifixion is the same Spirit that lives in you today and promises a resurrection from the dead for you if you believe.

Obligated to holiness

"Brothers, we are debtors." We who are Christians do not owe anything to our flesh. We are not obligated to fulfill our selfish desires, but are indebted to the Spirit of God for showing us grace in that "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

(Romans 5:8)" We are obligated to live a Spirit filled-life. If you choose to live by the flesh, you will certainly die.You will die if your trust and hope is in your selfish, sinful desires. BUT...but if you put those things to death by the enabling of the Holy Spirit, you will live.

Put those things to death

This verse says, "if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live" sounds a lot like what we have been discussing for the past month - killing sin. This verse actually uses the word death to explain what Paul said earlier - "Do not let sin reign in your bodies." Kill your sin. Put it death. Rid yourself of those desires. But realize that it is the Holy Spirit that enables you to do so. By the Spirit we have power to remove sin, but if you do not have the Spirit you are enslaved to sin. Jesus said "if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off." Now think about this. Jesus says take the most desperate measures. If your feet cause you to sin, saw them off. Men, if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off. If you mind causes you to sin, cut your head off. These are the examples for killing sin. Apply this to everyday issues - cars, internet connection, TV, alcohol, and so on. None of these things are sin, but they may lead you to sin and to protect yourself, you need to rid yourself from them.

Sons of God, Heirs with Christ

If you are led of the Spirit, you have become a child of God. When God sent Jesus to die on our behalf, he did not leave it at that, but placed us into his own family. We are his sons and daughters. So then, we do not have to be fearful of our Heavenly Father. He has enabled us to call unto him as a son does to his Dad. You are his adopted children. In Roman culture, an adopted child had all of the rights and privileges that the rest of the family had. His previous life was forgotten. He is now a part of a new family with a new father and new brothers and sisters. This is exactly what it is like for you and me, if you are indeed a child of God. We have a new house, a new father, new brothers and sisters, and a new existence. Our sinful past has been forgotten and we are known solely as sons of the Living God.

I have an adopted cousin, so I'm somewhat familiar with adoption in our cultural context. She is treated as a natural daughter would be treated. She is pampered, disciplined, and praised by her parents. But sometimes I wonder if she thinks in the back of her mind, "I'm not really their daughter." Or "is this right? Can I really be adopted and treated as if I was birthed by this woman?" I don't know if that's how she feels, but I know I've felt that way with God before. "Am I really his child? Can I really believe that I'm his now and my past is forgotten?"

"The Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." If you are a doubter, like Thomas was, then this verse is for you. If you doubt what you have put your trust in, the Spirit will be there to reassure you, if you are saved. If you are a believing person, you have the Spirit's comfort and reassurance that God is with you. If you struggle with doubt, get to know the Spirit. Spend time with him, allow him to comfort you, and most of all, allow him to instruct you.

"If we are children, then we are heirs with Christ." This is where we'll end tonight. If you were adopted into a Roman family, you would now have a part in the family inheritance. Your father would give you a chunk of what he had been putting back for his kids. You would be involved in this as his child. God has an inheritance waiting for you in the next life if you are his child. Jesus is an heir, and now so are we.

What is this inheritance?

In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 1:11-14

Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.

Hebrews 9:15

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

1 Peter 1:3-5

Our inheritance is eternal and cannot be taken away. We have now inherited eternal life. All Christians everywhere have been given an inheritance from their father-life eternal that will be spent with him. If you are not a believer, the question you may be asking is "how do I get a share in the inheritance?" Turn from your sins and trust in Jesus. Without Jesus, you have no eternal hope, no life, no assurance. But with Christ, through his atoning, bloody death and bodily resurrection, you can receive eternal life and an eternal existence with the Father.